

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
Minutes
North House Folk School, Grand Marais
September 17, 2014

Members Present: Bob Stine (Chair), Susan Solterman Audette, Dennis Becker (alternate for Alan Ek), Greg Bernu, Forrest Boe, Wayne Brandt, Dale Erickson, Shaun Hamilton, Darla Lenz, Bob Lintelmann, Gene Merriam, Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Kathleen Preece, John Rajala (alternate for Bob Owens), Mary Richards, Mike Trutwin

Members Absent: Alan Ek, Bob Owens

Staff Present: Dave Zumeta, Lindberg Ekola, Calder Hibbard, Amanda Kueper, Michael Lynch, Rachael Nicoll, Rob Slesak, Clarence Turner

Guests: John Bathke (private landowner), Kerrie Berg (Cook County SWCD), Jennifer Corcoran (MN DNR), Jim Hall (Cook County SWCD), Howard Hedstrom (Hedstrom Lumber Company), Brian Larsen (Cook County News Herald), Casey McQuiston (USDA Forest Service), Tim Miller (Grand Portage Reservation Tribal Council), Dick Rossman (MN DNR), Ingrid Schneider (UMN), Molly Thompson (Sugarloaf)

Chair's Remarks

Bob Stine began the meeting with introductions. He yielded time to Shawn Perich, who welcomed everyone to Grand Marais. Shawn briefly described the importance of tourism and the Hedstrom Mill to the local economy. He said that the lingering effects of the 1999 blowdown emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy forest. He mentioned that the town of Grand Marais continues to evolve culturally and demographically.

Bob also yielded some time to Shaun Hamilton, who explained that the North House Folk School (NHFS) was formerly a USDA Forest Service warehouse site acquired by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and sold to city of Grand Marais. The NHFS successfully bid for the site. This legacy project has had an important impact on the city. TPL's footprint in the city extends to the conversion of a leaking gas station into Harbor Park. TPL led the fundraising effort for this project.

Bob provided tentative meeting dates for several MFRC meetings in 2015: January 14, March 18, and May 13. He explained that January 14 is the Christian Orthodox New Year and requested notification if meeting on this date will present a conflict for anyone. Bob explained that he is only setting first half 2015 meeting dates because he is not reapplying to be MFRC Chair when his term ends in early 2015. It is the prerogative of the Chair to select MFRC meeting dates. Bob served on the Council for six years as the Research and Higher Education representative and for the past four years as Chair. Bob asked Council members to let him know about their preferences regarding tentative second half 2015 MFRC meeting dates.

Public Comments

Bob Stine welcomed comments from meeting guests. Dave Zumeta noted that several guests have participated in the Northeast (NE) Landscape Plan revision process. One of these guests, Jim Hall, noted that the plan revision process proceeded more rapidly than the 1997-2003 NE Landscape planning process. Ingrid Schneider, University of Minnesota (U of MN) Department of Forest Resources Professor and Director of the U of MN Tourism Center spoke about her research related to visitor perceptions of EAB and mountain pine bark beetle management.

Approval of July 23 MFRC Meeting Minutes*

Mary Richards moved, and Wayne Brandt seconded approval of July 23 MFRC meeting minutes. *The minutes were unanimously approved.*

Approval of Agenda*

Wayne Brandt moved, and Mike Trutwin seconded approval of the meeting agenda. *The agenda was unanimously approved.*

Executive Director Remarks

Dave Zumeta noted that the location of the November 12 MFRC meeting was moved from the Cloquet Forestry Center to the Arden Hills Department of Transportation Conference and Training Center. There are several reasons for this decision: 1) to accommodate presenters, including Carrie Meyerhoff, senior author of the recently released Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) Report on DNR Forest Management, and 2) to facilitate attendance of Southeast (SE) Landscape Committee members.

Dave yielded time to Kathleen Preece to discuss the upcoming Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership (MFRP) Minnesota Forest Futures conference. The purpose of the conference is to bring attention to the needs of the forest products industry as well as to discuss the content of and recommendations from the MFRC report on the competitiveness of the Minnesota forest products industry. Kathleen noted that invitations have been sent. Participation is limited to 80 people. Governor Dayton has expressed interest in attending. Dave thanked the MFRP, Kathleen, and Council members that have helped to make this conference possible.

Finally, Dave requested that Council members submit quarterly expense reimbursement requests to avoid unexpected expenses at the end of the fiscal year.

Committee Reports

Personnel and Finance

This committee not met, but Bob Stine will schedule a meeting for some time after October 13.

Site-Level

Dave Parent reported that the committee has not met. Rob Slesak commented on the status of funding for the Site-level Guidelines Field Book and recent pre-testing of the book with loggers affiliated with the Minnesota Logger Education Program. Loggers provided positive feedback. Rob thanked DNR Creative Services for vital contributions, and also thanked other partners.

Landscape Planning/Coordination

Shaun Hamilton noted that the committee met on August 26. The committee focused on the NE Plan and reviewed comments on the plan received during the public review period. The revision of the NE Plan is on today's meeting agenda. Shaun said that there were some very positive comments, especially from some Council members.

Information Management Committee (IMC)

Kathleen Preece stated that the committee met on August 11, and toured the DNR Resource Assessment office in Grand Rapids. She said that Heather Rand, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), spoke about DEED efforts related to increasing market opportunities for traditional forest products, renewable energy, and bio-products. Calder said that the IMC began the process of reviewing the structure of the committee and its mission. Mark White of The Nature Conservancy presented on the Northwoods Climate Change Response Framework Project's Minnesota Forest Ecosystem Vulnerability Assessment and Synthesis report.

Written Communication to the MFRC

None. Dave Zumeta mentioned several recent personnel changes of note. Molly Thompson's husband, Doug Thompson, former head of the Northeast Chapter of TNC, has left TNC to return to practicing law. Doug's job was reconfigured to become the Forest Conservation Program Director for Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, a position that will be filled by Jim Manolis, who is leaving DNR. Jim worked for the MFRC Landscape Program for three years in the early 2000s and more recently has been actively involved in the NE plan revision process.

Another person that has worked closely with the NE planning process, Emily Peters, a former U of MN postdoctoral fellow and a former MPCA research analyst, was recently hired to replace Kurt Rusterholz as forest ecologist in the DNR Ecological and Water Resources Division. Dave believes that she will make an excellent replacement. Forrest Boe concurred with Dave.

Shawn Perich noted that his alternate, Mark Johnson, formerly Executive Director of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, has recently taken position as Executive Director for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Rick Horton, National Wild Turkey Federation, will replace Mark as Shawn's alternate. Dave and Shawn noted that Mark will do very well in this position and has collaborated well with the Council in the past.

Committee of the Whole: Draft resolution to approve FY2016-17 MFRC budget restoration/change level request*

Bob Stine noted that the Personnel and Finance Committee has worked directly with DNR staff on the MFRC budget restoration/change level request. Dave Zumeta handed out an updated version of the change level request worksheet (updated from the version that was sent out in the meeting mailing). DNR staff was required by the Governor's office to update all change level requests to conform with some format changes in the request form, and Dave worked with DNR staff to revised the MFRC request.

Greg Bernu moved, and Shaun Hamilton seconded the motion to approve the version of the MFRC change level request that had been sent out with the meeting mailing.

Forrest explained the process of moving the change level request to the Governor's office, but he stated that it will be tweaked during the process. Shaun Hamilton asked if the legislature can take action on future fiscal year budget requests or just for the next fiscal year. Wayne Brandt said that if the legislature chooses to do so, they can put in in the "tails target" for review in future fiscal years.

Dave noted a significant change in the document's format. The third page of the revised handout includes a quality piece in the "Results" section which was not in the first version. A major component of this quality piece was a quote from the recently released Forest Management evaluation report from the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) that highlights the MFRC's role in developing and maintaining Best Management Practice guidelines and the critical importance of these guidelines in maintaining dual third-party certification of 4.8 million acres of DNR-administered land. Dave also noted that a quantity piece focuses on the measure to increase the number of forest landscape plans updated per year. The change level would support additional pursuits to procure non-General Fund, competitive funding congruent with streamlining and integrating MFRC programs and operations.

Bob explained that the primary motivation to pursue a budget restoration/change level request is to ensure the sustainability of the MFRC, which cannot continue to operate on \$580,000 per year unless one or more essential staff members were laid off. The sunset date of the Council was extended to 2021 with the revision of the Sustainable Forest Resources Act.

Gene Merriam stated that justification #5, "fully reimburse DNR for fiscal and human resources support services that it provides to the MFRC", on page three erodes #1-4. He has found that weak arguments destroy strong arguments at the legislature. Forrest Boe agreed. Dave noted that an entire paragraph on page two needs to be deleted to clear this message. Shaun suggested possibly reframing it in a way that suggests that the MFRC wants to support these services.

Shaun Hamilton moved, and Greg Bernu seconded the motion to amend the original version of the MFRC change level request to conform with the version that Dave Zumeta had handed out at the beginning of the change level request discussion, with the paragraph deleted. The motion was unanimously approved. The motion to approve the amended MFRC change level request carried unanimously.

Status of Southeast Landscape Plan revision

Shaun Hamilton introduced Lindberg Ekola and Amanda Kueper, MFRC Landscape Forester. The Southeast (SE) Regional Landscape Committee will ask the council to approve the revised SE Landscape Plan at the MFRC meeting on November 12. Lindberg provided an overview of the planning timeline, which started in 2002. The Landscape Program was awarded a six-part grant in 2010 from the USDA Forest Service that supported the generation of technical documents.

The SE Regional Landscape Committee chose to pursue a revision of the 10-year old plan. The MFRC unanimously passed motion in support of a SE Plan revision in January 2014. A public review period of the draft plan was recently completed. The council will see the comments once they are evaluated.

Amanda provided highlights from the revised SE Plan. She noted that the overall structure of the plan was copied from the NE Plan. Amanda provided information on the SE Landscape Region and some of the issues unique to the region, including the importance of water resources due to the regional karst topography, invasive species, a high proportion of private land ownership, fine hardwood forests, and unique forest products markets.

Amanda introduced the region's landscape goals: 1) ecological – increase forest land, decrease fragmentation, and protect forest health and quality; 2) social – seek resources to provide more education for private forest landowners; and 3) economic – maintain and enhance a viable forest products industry and an array of ecosystem services. Shaun Hamilton said it seems that these goals are more integrated than those of other landscapes.

Gene Merriam commented on the impact of agricultural erosion in the blufflands. Amanda said that bluffland conservation is a high priority within the ecological goals. Lindberg mentioned specific projects that target bluffland transition zones. Greg Bernu asked if the SE Plan will take local zoning ordinances into account. Lindberg responded that directives related to zoning are within the social goals. Dale Erickson asked about agricultural Best Management Practices in the region. Dave Zumeta replied that MN Department of Agriculture (MDA) has an initiative similar to DNR's forestry BMP development. John Rajala inquired about DNR/MDA collaboration on this. Agricultural activities have led to a significant deterioration in water quality in the region. There should be a "no net loss of forested acres" policy to stop conversion. Amanda responded that this is a major focus of the regional committee.

Amanda then provided an overview of the desired future conditions and strategy. Because funds are not available to implement the broad goals and strategies of the full plan, the committee created a 10-year work plan that will be an iterative process based on monitoring results. Annual work programs and reports will provide accountability. Amanda said that the SE Plan recommendations are adapted from the NE Plan. A major component of the plan is encouragement of partners and coordination efforts.

The Landscape Committee will review the public comments on October 22. The full Council will review the final draft plan at the November 12 meeting. The draft plan and technical documents are available at the MFRC website at: <http://mn.gov/frc/index.html>.

Wayne Brandt asked about participation in the SE planning process. Lindberg responded that the broader review committee is comprised of 12-15 people. The review committee members attended regularly and represented a diversity of groups. The planning committee consisted of six people and represented a variety of groups as well. Forrest Boe asked about comments

received on the plan. Amanda said that not many comments were received. A few received from the DNR and were mostly high-level. The comments seem mostly positive thus far.

Dave Parent said that the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service could provide technical assistance on the water quality portion of the plan, as there are a number of entities working on these issues in the SE. Given that the MFRC SE Landscape Committee is a small entity with limited resources, and that DNR's presence in the SE has declined in recent years, the region tends to be neglected. Gene Merriam inquired about involvement from the McKnight Foundation, which he said would be a good resource. Lindberg replied that the foundation has only been involved very tangentially. A few NGO's involved in the planning process have applied for McKnight Foundation funds. Mary Richards asked if we have engaged groups such as Ducks Unlimited and the Ruffed Grouse Society to seek out opportunities for collaboration. The answer is yes, but not specifically in the Southeast.

Proposed federal Wildfire Disaster Funding Act

Dave Zumeta introduced Shawn Perich. Shawn described the rationale for discussing this issue. All non-fire USDA Forest Service programs have lost funding over time because the majority of funds are increasingly dedicated to firefighting efforts. Shawn and Dave participated on a recent teleconference regarding the proposed federal Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, which if passed would remedy this issue. The proposed act was introduced and currently is being reviewed by the U.S. House and Congress.

Shawn discussed an article he recently published in Northern Wilds, which he provided as a handout. The article highlights how federal spending on firefighting efforts has increased dramatically and the need to address this increase and its adverse impacts on other programs on both an annual and long-term basis.

Dave referenced the Flame Act from five years ago, which was a similar legislative effort to change the way fire suppression was funded to avoid dipping into other programmatic funding. Although the act was passed and worked fairly well for about a year, Darla Lenz noted that Congress then removed Flame Act funds during low fire years, making the funds unavailable in subsequent years when they were needed. Dave added that the proposed act would allow the Forest Service to plan for and fund suppression of major wildfires in a way that is similar to how other natural disasters are handled. He mentioned that five years ago the MFRC passed an action item in support of the Flame Act and sent letters to the Governor and Congressional delegation. He suggested that the Council could vote on a similar action related to the current act at the next MFRC meeting, and suggested that the IMC could initiate this process.

Darla stated that the USDA Forest Service has seen a 30% reduction of employees associated with non-fire programs, but federal fire employees have increased. This funding issue has significant impacts that are felt on the ground. Forrest Boe commented that DNR Forestry has felt the effects as well. Dedicated federal funding to states is recalled at the last minute. Counties and municipalities are affected as well because the state otherwise would pass on some of these funds. Forrest would feel comfortable taking a vote on this and encourages

everyone to vote affirmatively. Darla added that a lot of partnership projects have lost a lot of momentum – this is not a good way to do business.

Bob Stine introduced Tim Miller, Grand Portage Reservation Tribal Council Forester. Tim said that costs are greatly increasing for Grand Portage's fire suppression efforts, and the Tribal Council is supportive of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act. This issue will become more prominent as fuel builds up through time. Bob Lintelmann noted that they are dealing with a lot of the same issues in the Department of the Interior, of which the Bureau of Indian Affairs is a part. Dennis Becker mentioned that he chairs the National Committee on Forest Policy of the Society of American Foresters, which is actively involved with this issue. He could offer talking points and letters that they have sent. Mike Trutwin asked what is driving the rising costs. Tim replied that there are many factors, including the wildland/urban interface, the need for aerial resources, and the fact that fires are getting into areas that may not have burned in the past.

Gene Merriam expressed support for this initiative, but he hopes that it does not just treat the symptoms. We need to recognize the ecological role of fires, and perhaps we need to select which fires we suppress. Howard Hedstrom replied that it is necessary to fight all fires. He asserted that we need to guarantee funding for the Forest Service. There are several mechanisms to fight forest fires, and we should not just pull the money from the USDA Forest Service's budget. Wayne Brandt added that the USDA Forest Service spends approximately \$2 billion per year on fire suppression, but spends only about \$500 million on vegetation management work. Mike Trutwin said that industry could play a role in reducing fuel loads, especially in light of potential future wood-based industry development opportunities.

Bob Stine reported that the IMC will review this issue, and that Council members should plan to vote on this issue at the November 12 meeting.

Potential effects of climate change on northern Minnesota forests

Shawn Perich introduced Casey McQuiston, USDA Forest Service-Superior National Forest. Casey provided highlights from the Northwoods Climate Change Response Framework (CCRF) Project's Minnesota Forest Ecosystem Vulnerability Assessment and Synthesis report. He covered risks and opportunities in NE Minnesota associated with climate change, noting that climate change projections in the report are approximate and broad. The report addresses Native Plant Community (NPC) systems as well as managed aspen and red pine systems.

The major finding of the report is that average temperatures and extreme precipitation events have increased in NE Minnesota. The report covers major impacts of climate change on forests, but it does not address interactions of these effects as they are difficult to predict. Public agencies and the private sector, among others, were represented on the management and research panel. The panel assessed the vulnerability of each of several forest ecosystems. Dave Zumeta noted that information from the report helped inform the revision of the NE Plan. Casey mentioned that the MFRC was very supportive of the CCRF effort from the outset, which helped provide momentum for the process.

Casey provided examples of demonstration projects that are currently applying information from the report. A forest stewardship project in the Superior National Forest is in collaboration with Rajala Companies. Casey emphasized that the report does not make any recommendations; rather, it is a tool for implementing climate-informed forest management. Casey also noted that while the CCRF group is not based in Minnesota, members such as Stephen Handler are willing to assist with the implementation of these materials on site as their schedules allow.

Casey discussed several communication outlets for sharing the report information, such as field reviews and webinars. A four-page NE Minnesota Forest Ecosystem Vulnerability Assessment and Synthesis Technical Summary is available for distribution. More information is located at www.forestadaption.org; or by contacting or Stephen Handler (shandler@fs.fed.us) or Casey McQuiston (cmcquiston@fs.fed.us).

John Rajala commented that this report really worked when applied to a specific project and site, and that the project managers went through the entire procedure prescribed by the report. It is a really useful tool that can force a land manager to ask important and necessary questions, no matter one's stance on climate change. Greg Bernu added that this information can be applied to other situations, such as planning for ash loss due to EAB. Shawn Perich mentioned the importance of balsam fir and its reductions in other parts of Minnesota, which makes the species vulnerable. Dave Zumeta replied that studies at the U of MN Reich Forest Ecology Lab are looking at potential shifts in species ranges. He also noted the importance of adapting and frequently reviewing our strategies as new information develops.

Susan Solterman Audette inquired about the level of agreement among the management and research panel about the models used. Casey replied that this was a topic of discussion in 2011, when the process started. The committee agreed that climate modeling is coarse, but the authors were generally comfortable with the models used because they are widely accepted by the scientific community, with the caveat that they are not perfect.

Susan also asked about outreach to key lawmakers and funding entities. She suggested just providing the introduction of the report as the details and technical information may not be well understood in a quick read. The four-page Technical Summary may also serve this purpose. Dave Zumeta added that key vehicles for communication and outreach include the Cloquet Forestry Center and SFEC.

Draft resolution to approve revised Northeast Landscape Plan

Shaun Hamilton introduced Lindberg Ekola and Mike Lynch. Lindberg provided an overview of the Northeast (NE) Plan revision timeline and process. After the recent public comment period, the Planning Committee reviewed the final plan and recommended review by the MFRC Landscape Committee. The Landscape Committee subsequently reviewed the plan and recommended final approval by the full Council.

Mike reiterated the major components of both the NE and SE Landscape Plans. He provided an overview of the NE landscape, noting that 85% of the region is forested. He said that because of checkerboard ownership patterns between multiple public and private landowners, managing across ownership boundaries is especially important in this region. All supporting technical documents as well as the full draft plan are located on the MFRC website at: <http://mn.gov/frc/index.html>.

Mike discussed the strategic direction for the NE landscape, including assets, issues, desired future conditions, goals and objectives. Mike noted that the Planning Committee struggled with the integration of the economic, ecological, and social goals. To address this issue, the committee separately considered seven different sections and developed specific vegetation goals for NPCs. The committee also developed coordination and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation frameworks. A NE Landscape Coordination and Implementation Committee will work within these frameworks. The NE Plan concludes with recommendations to resource agencies and organizations.

Greg Bernu moved, and Wayne Brandt seconded the motion to approve the Northeast Landscape Plan.

Gene Merriam asked how best to describe the NE Plan revision. Dave Zumeta responded that the revision had three major components: 1) revising ecological goals that were in the 2003 plan; 2) integrating climate change considerations into the plan; and 3) adding a more robust economic analysis based on work done by the U of MN Duluth Labovitz School of Business and Economics.

Gene mentioned the challenges of managing people and our societal values related to private property. The goals of the plan are aspirational and good, but how do we achieve them? Lindberg replied that Part Three, Operationalizing the Plan, addresses this by creating frameworks for use by the Implementation and Coordination Committee. Dave Zumeta added that the MFRP and other entities present have been very active and this process. We've also tried to engage interested parties and organizations in the planning process. Bob Stine said that we have worked to gain a lot of support for this, and we will likely need help from the legislature and others on policies necessary for plan implementation. Shaun added that we need unique, local resources such as the NE Landscape Committee in order to make these coordinated efforts happen.

The motion to approve the Northeast Landscape Plan carried unanimously.

Erosion control using toe wood structures on the Flute Reed River

Shawn Perich introduced Jim Hall, Supervisor, and Kerrie Berg, District Manager, Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District. Shawn noted the importance of the Flute Reed River as a local resource. Until recently, open clay banks were badly eroding into the river. The Flute Reed Partnership formed to address this issue and competed successfully for project funding.

Kerrie explained that the Cook County SWCD was the restoration project's managing organization. Funding was provided by a federal Great Lakes Restoration Grant in 2012. The goal of the grant was to reduce turbidity and improve fish habitat. There were five high priority streambank improvement projects completed by working cooperatively with local landowners.

Kerrie described the restoration process, which included the creating bankfull benches that capture eroding soil. The toe wood technique uses logs to add stability to the bankfull benches. This process is considered to have relatively long-term stability; a similar process on another river remained stable through the 2012 flood in NE Minnesota. Replanting of the excavated and built sites has been necessary, with living stacks made from willow and dogwood cuttings that give the erosion prevention structures a more natural appearance. Monitoring of the Flute Reed River has shown that the turbidity of the water has improved since the project. The banks will continue to subside, but the project is designed to catch this eroding soil. There are additional sites along the Flute Reed that could be addressed, and there is interest from landowners.

Shaun Hamilton asked about the practical length limit for this type of process. Kerrie replied that there is no technical limit, but the longest treated length was 300 feet. Dave Parent asked if Kerrie measured water quality downstream to account for water flow changes. Kerrie said that they lessened the curvature of river to account for this. Dave Zumeta asked if all woody material came from Cook County. Jim Hall replied in the affirmative. He mentioned that a good source of trees for future projects is salvage material from road building.

Shawn further described the value of the Flute Reed River. Sediment from the Flute Reed River contributed to water quality, health, and aesthetics issues in Lake Superior's Chicago Bay. Clay erosion is considered one of the most significant sources of pollution of Lake Superior: it heightens water temperature and might get stuck in fish gills.

Public Communications to the MFRC

None.

MFRC Member Comments

Forrest Boe mentioned and handed out copies of a new DNR Forestry publication, "Standing Tall".

Gene Merriam mentioned a recent op. ed. from Wayne Brandt on the northern long-eared bat as well as an article on technology and the forest industry in the latest issue of *Conservation Volunteer*. Rachael Nicoll will send these items out to Council Members and meeting guests.

John Rajala thanked the Council for its support following the recent loss of his brother, Nikolas Rajala.

Darla Lenz announced the cutting event on October 29 for the Capitol Christmas tree. Sixteen tree tour events in Minnesota will follow. People can follow the progress of the Capitol Christmas tree on social media.

Greg Bernu said that counties have exchanged approximately 18,000 acres of land with private entities and tribes in the last four to five months.

Shaun Hamilton moved, and Mike Trutwin seconded adjourning the meeting. *The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.*